

MRS. HENROTIN ON HOUSEHOLD ECONOMICS.

Why Our College Girls Make Poor Housekeepers and the Importance of Teaching Them Domestic Science.

SOME months ago two ladies were seated in the section opposite mine in a Pullman. They were middle-aged women, evidently well off, but not so wealthy that the care of their homes was relegated to others. They represented the average American woman. I was interested because the subject of their conversation was one which is of paramount importance to all women—the best education to give a girl, especially on the subject of domestic science.

Here are the main points of what they said:

Mrs. A.—Since Grace married I have been so busy furnishing her house for her! When she returned from New York all she had to do was to walk into it. My cook, Eliza, was so fond of Grace I gave her up, and Eliza practically runs Grace's house. But it is hard for me to do without Eliza, for I have now three houses—the house at the lake, my house in town and Grace's house, for Grace has no taste for housekeeping. Ever since she left the university I have tried to interest her, but she does not seem able to learn.

Mrs. B.—I am sure such a brilliant woman as Grace will soon be a good housekeeper. When a girl has been studying from seven years old until she is twenty-two, and then marries, she naturally knows very little about the details of housekeeping.

Mrs. A.—But the trouble is that a girl educated as Grace has been loses all wish to know the details of housekeeping, and finds it a "bore." Then she has always had some one to do for her. I had a theory once that if the education of a girl was like that given to a boy, she should be treated in the same way. Consequently, when Grace was at home, I never asked her to do anything except amuse herself. When she left college and came home she became engaged, and was married almost immediately. Her friends are gay. John and she enjoy society, and so it goes. Grace says that housekeeping is only hit and miss, that she would be a good housekeeper if there was anything to learn about it, but that there is nothing. As she expresses it, I was born a good housekeeper and she was not.

Mrs. B.—Grace is not so far wrong. I never thought much about it until my two nieces came to live with me. Only two in the family made things easy, and I liked it. I suppose I ought to teach them, but to tell the truth I do not know where to commence. They are both busy; one is studying music and the other is trying "art." But she has no talent for painting. I believe she would make a good cook, but my cook is a good one, and a cross one, too. She would never consent to have Mary go to the kitchen, and my husband's relatives would be up in arms if I suggested that Mary should learn to cook.

"I am sure of one thing, that household science must be taught in the schools exactly as any other science. In a well appointed house there is not much for a girl to learn, because it is conducted simply by experience and tact. Those two things cannot be imparted, no matter how willing the teacher or how apt the pupil. People talk of the wonderful servants of the past; the fact is that we have one hundred skilled servants to-day to one in the past. One can buy so many ready-made things nowadays. There is a beautiful tea room in Kansas City, where the ladies give lunch parties. It is conducted by a lady of great executive ability, and you can have a lunch served for any number of people, and served in the perfection of neatness. Think what an easy way to give a lunch! No wonder women like it. It is like an entertaining at his club—a thing I have always envied my husband."

Mrs. A.—Yes, so have I. There are several clubs in the East where women can entertain their guests from "out of town." It is a most convenient arrangement, but when I was a girl I used to enjoy getting ready for a "party." We even ironed our muslin dresses and knew how to wash fine lace.

Mrs. B.—I have thought so much about this since my nieces decided they must be self-supporting, for now no girl will allow herself to be supported, unless by her husband or father. In the meantime we are spending enough on their education in music and art to provide them both with a good marriage portion if it were put by until they needed it.

Mrs. A.—Yes, my daughters' education has been very expensive, even more than my sons'. We made the boys an allowance, and the girls also, but neither Grace nor Lucy has lived within her allowance. It is useless to attempt to teach girls after they leave school or college the rudiments of domestic science. It must be taught in the public schools, and as a part of a college curriculum. The trouble is we have made too much of a purely intellectual training, and housework or the professions and trades which underlie the home will never be respected until they are associated with the regular courses of study.

Mrs. B.—That is right. I have often wondered why the Mount Holyoke girls and girls educated at similar institutions so disliked housework. It is just for the reason housework is not made a regular study and has no scientific basis. It is not knowledge for use in their future lives, but an arbitrary doing of what seems to them manual labor. Therefore they dislike it and do not respect it. They look on it as unnecessary and tiresome, and drop it as soon as they possibly can.

Mrs. A.—Yes, the true field for success in life for a woman is to take up the new trades and professions which the study of household economics and science

will develop. The college woman will be the first to systematize and bring into practical working the information which is being compiled on this subject.

Mrs. B.—That gives me an idea for Mary. I shall look into the various courses of study in the colleges and institutes at home, and advise her to prepare herself as a practical teacher of household economics.

Mrs. A.—Yes, persuade her to give up her nervous attempts at "art," and she is so young that she has plenty of time to fit herself as a teacher in household science. Women are commencing to realize the importance of such instruction, and it is almost impossible to find a lecturer capable of conducting classes in the household trades. I have tried to find such a teacher for my home department of the club, and could not procure such a lecturer in our city. I could form a class



"How My Daughter Gets Ready to Go to a Party."

of young married women who would gladly join.

At this point the conversation branched off to club matters in general, but I felt the considerations suggested by my neighbors were interesting not alone to mothers—but to club women.

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